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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

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The President
 The White House
 Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

When the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) talks began in 1969, the U.S. had two fundamental objectives: preventing the Soviets from deploying an offensive first strike capability, and preventing the Soviets from deploying a nationwide Anti-Ballistic Missile defense. These two objectives were integrally linked in the Preambles to the 1972 SALT I ABM Treaty, the 1972 SALT I Interim Offensive Agreement, and the 1979 SALT II Treaty. But we have completely failed to achieve our two fundamental SALT objectives, after almost two decades of the SALT negotiating process. This is because the Soviets now have a first strike capability, and are about to have a nationwide ABM defense. Thus supreme U.S. national interests should require America to withdraw from the 1972 SALT I ABM Treaty, rather than to pledge to Soviet Dictator Gorbachev to abide by it for another seven years.

I believe that the U.S. should withdraw from the ABM Treaty partly because of the following U.S. Unilateral Statement to SALT I ABM Treaty, of May 9, 1972, expressing American policy:

"...The U.S. Delegation believes that an objective of the follow-on [i.e. SALT II] negotiations should be to constrain and reduce on a long term basis threats to the survivability of our respective strategic retaliatory forces...If an agreement providing for more complete strategic offensive arms limitations were not achieved within five years, U.S. supreme national interests could be jeopardized. Should that occur, it would constitute a basis for withdrawal from the ABM Treaty."

But the Soviets now have deployed a first strike counterforce capability which threatens the survivability of our deterrent retaliatory forces, according to authoritative

Administration statements. Moreover, after fourteen years of negotiations there are no permanent, or even interim constraints on Soviet offensive forces: the SALT I Interim Offensive Agreement expired in 1977 and the fatally flawed SALT II Treaty was never ratified and expired in 1985. Therefore, under the two conditions of the 1972 U.S. Unilateral Statement, U.S. supreme national interests require U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty.

There is another criterion available to judge the failure of the SALT process. Under the Brooke amendment to the SALT I resolution of approval of 1972, the Senate itself stated that SALT I and the SALT II negotiations would be based upon:

"the preservation of longstanding U.S. policy that neither the Soviet Union or the United States should seek unilateral advantage by developing a first-strike potential."

The Brooke Amendment thus posited that the success of SALT I and SALT II depended on the prevention of a Soviet first strike potential.

But according to authoritative Administrative statements, the Soviets have a first strike capability. You have stated that:

"Modern, accurate ICMs carrying multiple nuclear warheads -- if deployed in sufficiently large numbers relative to the size of an opponent's force structure, as the Soviets have done with their ICBM force - could be used in a rapid first strike to undercut an opponent's ability to retaliate effectively...(Strategic Defense Initiative Presidential White Paper, January, 1985)

Your National Security Advisor stated in January 1985:

"... American land-based missiles have become even more vulnerable to Soviet first strike attack over the past few years."

And in your May, 1985 Victory in Europe Day Speech, you yourself also described the Soviet "first strike" capability, and alarmingly warned that the Soviet threat now emerging jeopardizes "deterrence itself."

In your Strategic Modernization Statement of June 3, 1986, you again stated that there is a:

"growing strategic imbalance between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.... In calculating what they call 'the correlation of forces,' the Soviet political and

military leadership are ever mindful of the state of the nuclear balance between the United States and the Soviet Union... any weakening of our nuclear deterrent, leaving the Soviet Union with superior nuclear forces... could invite the Soviet Union to rely on such an advantage... this loss in survivability of U.S. strategic forces, coupled with the magnitude of the Soviet buildup, had begun to erode seriously the stability of the strategic balance..."

Moreover, Admiral William Crowe, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified to the Senate on June 19, 1986, that:

"The strategic nuclear balance has shifted dramatically. The Soviets now enjoy superiority in ICBMs..."

ICBMs are the key element in a first strike capability, and the Soviets have over a six to one advantage against U.S. hard targets in ICBM warheads. Finally, the CIA testified to the Senate on June 26, 1985, that:

"The Soviets already have enough hard-target-capable ICBM reentry vehicles today to attack all U.S. ICBM silos and launch control centers...In such an attack today, they would stand a good chance of destroying Minuteman silos."

In sum, it is clear that the Soviets have a first strike capability.

What about preventing a nationwide Soviet ABM defense, the second and integrally linked fundamental U.S. SALT objective? Last November, Defense Secretary Weinberger testified to the Senate that the Soviets already have "some nationwide ABM capability." Of course, even a base for a nationwide ABM defense is banned by Article I of the ABM Treaty. According to the authoritative, official, unclassified intelligence estimates, the Soviet Moscow ABM system modernization and upgrade will be operational in 1987, as will the illegal Krasnoyarsk Radar. The ABM-capable SAM-10 and SAM-12 mobile systems will be widely deployed by next year, and are already being internetted with the ABM-capable, already widely deployed SAM-5. The Soviet mobile ABM-3, already in mass production for deployment around Moscow, may also be deployed nationwide by next year. The SAM-5, SAM-10, and SAM-12 are also all being internetted with the Moscow ABM system. These ABM deployments will connect the Moscow ABM system to the illegal Krasnoyarsk ABM radar, where SAM-5s, SAM-10s, and SAM-12s are deployed, making a nationwide ABM defense for the Soviets. As the Defense and State Department White Paper on Soviet Strategic Defense Programs, of October, 1985, confirmed:


"The aggregate of current Soviet ABM and ABM-related activities suggests that the U.S.S.R. may be preparing an ABM defense of its national territory--precisely what the ABM Treaty was designed to prevent."

Mr. President, I agree with your statement of June 3, 1986: "We come to one of those unique crossroads of history where nations decide their fate. Our choices are clear.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I believe that it is a grave concession undermining world peace, American security, and strategic stability for the U.S. to agree to extend compliance with the ABM Treaty, especially on the eve of Soviet ABM Break out. Instead, we should withdraw from the ABM Treaty ourselves, not only because of Soviet nationwide ABM defense Break Out violations, but also because of the fourteen year failure of the SALT process to prevent a Soviet first strike capability jeopardizing American supreme national interests. It is clear that the U.S. is being subjected to nuclear blackmail by the Soviets in agreeing to extend our compliance with the ABM Treaty, against our supreme national interests. As Secretary of State Shultz has correctly stated, "Arms control is impossible in conditions of inequality."

I respectfully request that you provide me with your recent response to Soviet Dictator Gorbachev on arms control, as you have the NATO allies, together with your reasons for this response.

Sincerely,


Jesse Helms
U.S. Senator

Copies to: Secretary of State
Secretary of Defense
Chairman, JCS
Director, CIA
Director, ACDA